



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

# Iowa DNR News

## Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 2, 2019

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## Stay safe this paddling season

As Iowans start to thaw out from a brutal winter, paddlers and other boaters are itching to hit the water. While some river levels have dropped, others remain high and unsafe.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) recommends that paddlers wait for warmer weather to let the water temperatures rise slowly. It could be several weeks before water temperatures are ideal and safe.

“Regardless of how warm the air may feel in first weeks of spring, the water is still dangerously cold and can be deadly to boaters,” said Todd Robertson, Iowa DNR River Programs Water Trails coordinator. “Cold water shock and hypothermia can set in fast if you are not dressed for cold water immersion.”

After snowmelt and heavy rains, water levels can rise quickly and produce strong and fast current. “Strainers” are numerous on most rivers, especially after high water events. A “strainer” can be a pile of tree limbs and debris, usually found on the outside of river bends where they continue to collect and pile up. The river’s current can suck you under a deadly “strainer” and hold you underwater with little chance of escape.

Review these simple safety tips before you head out on the water.

- Check your canoe or kayak for any needed repairs or maintenance after being stored for several months. Look for holes and leaks, make sure all hatch lids fit snug and securely and check your paddle blades for signs of cracking or splitting.
- Dust off your life jacket and make sure all buckles and zippers work properly and look for holes and tears. Replace the life jacket if it has damage that cannot be repaired. Wear a life jacket at all times while on the water, regardless of your swimming ability. “We encourage all boaters to wear their lifejackets and not just store them on board. When you need it, it won’t be there,” said Robertson. “Put the lifejacket on, if not for you, for the ones you love.”
- If paddling in colder conditions, wear a wetsuit or dry suit, along with layers, to help avoid hypothermia or cold water shock. Do not wear cotton. Dress for water

immersion, not the air temperature. You can adjust your clothing needs as the water heats up over the next several weeks.

- Always bring along a dry bag with a set of extra clothes you can change into if you get wet, a first-aid kit and a protected cell phone or weather radio. Pack plenty of water to stay hydrated.
- Let a friend or loved one know where you are going and when you are expected to return. It will be easier to find you if you need help.

Explore the Iowa DNR's interactive paddling map at <https://www.iowadnr.gov/Things-to-Do/Canoeing-Kayaking/Where-to-Paddle> to help you plan your first paddling trip this year.

**Media Contact:** Todd Robertson, Iowa DNR River Programs Outreach Coordinator at 515-243-3714.

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## Ice-out channel catfish are biting

Channel catfish move close to shore and are eager to bite in many lakes and the large reservoirs across Iowa just after the ice is gone. The bite starts sooner in the southern Iowa impoundment since they lose ice a week or two before northeast Iowa natural lakes.

After eating light during the winter, channel catfish go on a feeding frenzy in early spring cleaning up small fish that died over the winter. Search for actively feeding fish on windblown shorelines and points where dead fish are piled up and the shallow water warms quickly. Keep the wind in your face and move often until you find actively feeding fish.

Use cut bait or shad sides fished on the bottom. To keep the bait on the hook, try using a 1/0 to 3/0 bait holder hook and enough weight (3/8th to ½ ounce) to cast into the wind. Bring along disposable latex gloves to handle the bait and help keep the smell off your hands.

Ice-out catfishing can be good in any lake that has an abundant catfish population. Iowa's flood control reservoirs, Rathbun, Red Rock, Coralville and Saylorville usually offer the best action. Try catfishing in Storm Lake, East Okoboji, Clear Lake or Black Hawk Lake in northwest Iowa soon after the ice is gone. Small impoundments in southern Iowa, like Greenfield City Reservoir, Big Creek, Lake Darling, Green Valley or Lake Icaria, also offer good early spring catfishing.

Catfish can be found in almost every body of water across Iowa. Check the [weekly fishing report](#) to find out where catfish are biting.

**Media Contact:** Bryan Hayes, Fisheries Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 712-769-2587.

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## DNR Conservation Officer Griebel named Officer of the Year by Council



*Iowa state conservation officer Steve Griebel, assigned to Woodbury County, has been awarded the 2018 Waterfowl Officer of the Year by the Mississippi Flyway Law Enforcement Council of states and Canadian provinces. This is the first time the award has been won by an Iowa conservation officer. Griebel was recognized for his contributions in waterfowl education, wetland protection, youth waterfowling, participation with waterfowling organizations and his enforcement activity. He will receive the award at the Flyway Council's meeting in August in Duluth, Minn. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.*

The Mississippi Flyway Law Enforcement Council recently named Iowa DNR Conservation Officer Steven Griebel as its 2018 Officer of the Year.

Officer Griebel was selected from a vast field of candidates throughout the entire flyway, including Alabama, Arkansas, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee, Wisconsin and the Canadian provinces of Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario. He won with the highest number of first place votes ever recorded for the Officer of the Year award.

Officer Griebel was recognized for his contributions in waterfowl education, wetland protection, youth waterfowling, participation with waterfowling organizations and his enforcement activity. He spends a great deal of time interacting with hunters in the field, answering their many questions involving season and zone setting criteria, Iowa DNR wetland management strategies, waterfowl habits, offering advice on how to be a more successful hunter, and routinely helps hunters find birds with his dog enhancing the department's image.

Officer Griebel organizes and oversees the Waterfowl School for new officers and works alongside local biologists and other conservation agencies to restore wetland areas. He

spends time recruiting young hunters into the sport of waterfowling and instilling a love for the activity. He often loans his own personal decoys, shells, dog training supplies, boats and blinds to young hunters, and by far his largest impact on local youth has been his mentored hunt and youth waterfowl challenge.

Officer Griebel has developed a handicapped accessible waterfowl blind and is working with the local Ducks Unlimited Chapter, DNR wildlife management staff, and county conservation board to fundraise and implement the structure. He maintains a proactive and balanced law enforcement program which includes spending a great deal of time educating hunters about regulations. His efforts maximize and improve the positive opportunities available to hunters in Iowa and ensure that the hunting heritage continues to be supported and enjoyed by future generations.

“We are extremely proud of his efforts to protect and enhance the habitat for migratory game birds making for a rich environment and quality hunting opportunities,” said DNR Law Enforcement Bureau Chief Jeff Swearngin. “Steve’s commitment not only to the resource, but introducing youth to waterfowl hunting is impressive. It is humbling to see that his peers and leaders in the area recognize and applaud him for his efforts as well.”

This is the first time an Iowa DNR conservation officer has won this prestigious award. Officer Griebel will be formally recognized at the Flyway Council’s meeting in August in Duluth, MN.

Officer Steve Griebel has been working in conservation law enforcement for nearly 20 years. He began his career in the state and county park systems providing safe outdoor recreation and enforcing fish and game laws, as well as protecting timber, prairie, and wetland ecosystems. Since joining the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement Bureau in 2007, Steve has worked tirelessly to protect and promote the waterfowl resource. A life-long waterfowl hunter, Steve recognizes the balance of recruiting and educating new hunters, protecting waterfowl producing habitat, providing hunting opportunity, dedicating personal time to enhancing the resource, and holding those who seek to abuse our natural resources accountable.

The Mississippi Flyway Council was organized in 1952 and contains representatives from each state and provinces listed above, that have management responsibilities for migratory bird resources in the Flyway. The Council was established to coordinate the management of migratory game birds in the Mississippi Flyway and to promote those activities of its members that serve the long-term benefit to the resources as and the Flyway as a whole.

**Media Contacts:** Steven Griebel, DNR Conservation Officer, [Steven.Griebel@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Steven.Griebel@dnr.iowa.gov), (712) 301-4009.

Jeff Swearngin, DNR Law Enforcement Bureau Chief, [Jeffrey.Swearngin@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Jeffrey.Swearngin@dnr.iowa.gov), (515) 725-8479.

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## 2019 DNR sale set for May 4

DES MOINES – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources will hold the 2019 spring auction on May 4, at the Elwell Family Food Center on the Iowa State Fairgrounds, in Des Moines. Doors will open at 7 a.m., and the auction will begin at 8:30 a.m.

The public may view the items for sale and pre-register for the auction from 4 to 6 p.m., on May 3.

There will not be any buyer's premium fee added to the sale.

Items up for auction include more than 500 firearms, bows, gun barrels, scopes, gun cases and other assorted equipment. The items are sold "as is" with no guarantee or warranty.

Any person interested in purchasing a firearm at the auction must have either a valid Iowa permit to acquire pistols or revolvers, a federal firearms license, or a professional or non-professional permit to carry concealed weapons. The Iowa permit to acquire can be obtained from a sheriff's office. Allow two to three weeks to receive the permit.

Payment must be made on auction day. All sales are final. All items must be removed from the site within one half hour after the sale completion.

The Iowa DNR reserves the right to reject any bids and withdraw any item from the sale at any time.

A sale bill is available online at <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Hunting> and will be updated if inventory is added. The DNR will not be mailing any sale bills.

**Media Contact:** Craig Cutts, State Conservation Officer, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-238-4847.